

## THE DUTCH DOLLS

*Rodker, John, 1894-1955*

*"Hi, Hi, Hi. . . ."—Verlaine.*

To young men, who, being loved, therefrom engender within them a true passion, enduring nobly its heats and its chills and the vagaries of mistresses under the phases of the moon.

Who, seeing each new incident with the most intimate and disillusioning psychology, yet remain silent; and having suffered with what noble forbearance, learn they are reviled therefor.

Gentlemen, The Dutch Dolls!

*Pierrot.*

To-morrow will pass like other days.

Fear, hate, anger,

and at times. . . .

peace.

This till I'm with her.

Then pain, anger, contempt,

and in rare moments,

peace.

Through it all this pitiless unrest

will hold me fast,

till I must go

terrified and blank,

sombre like this street,

these lowering houses,

and she who watches

from trivial curtains

my footfalls sucked into eternity.

*Her first love.*

Leaning over her while she lay

thrown back across my knees, . . .

I bruised her lips

and the small hard breasts

with strainings and caresses.

She does not move. . .

says nothing

Is she wondering what it all means?

But now and then her eyes water, their lids droop,  
and her lips quiver.  
Her face grows darker. . .  
She strains me to her desperately. . .

It's hard to know what these young girls want!

*Going home.*

Come with me to the station!  
No!  
You don't love me.  
Oh,. . .  
Come then!  
"When you go I want to cry."  
His own eyes watered, and he felt for the handle of the door.

How empty the room would be when he'd gone.  
The idea oppressed him.  
A wild straining each to each.  
Don't go!  
He freed himself  
Ah, No! No!  
But he said sadly, you can't keep me.  
She went out of the room with averted head.

He knew her eyes would follow him down the street, but he did not look back at the window.  
She might wave to him . . . who left her thus forever—

Forever. . .  
Ah. . . till to-morrow.

*Backtalk.*

It's you, I love, only you!  
What then?  
You, you, only you!  
As much as other men.  
You, you, only you!  
Come then!  
You, you, ah . . . as much as other men.

*The Moonmaiden.*

Come!  
No!  
I will give you a white horse.  
No!  
I will give you a white baby.  
No!  
I will give you a white house.  
No!  
I will give you my own white dead body.  
No! it's cold, get my cloak.

Damn you, Columbine.  
Then they didn't 'core you.

(She weeps.)

*Interlude—Nostalgie de l'infini.*

You tangoed with him  
on the lawn  
in the moon,  
and I smiled.

At times you'd be strong,  
walk to me.  
You did not think I shook;  
hated you.

And when you'd dance with me,  
I went away.

Why do you tell me these years after,  
you wept for a long night?

*The plot thickens.*

I laid upon my love  
the spell of the kiss,  
and left her to her bitter pain.

Outside was Carnival.

When I returned  
she was gone.  
The night was cold  
but I slept warm,  
for I said  
she sleeps more cold than I.

That my love should leave me  
hurts me nothing;  
But that the spell of my kiss  
might thus, easily be broken,  
I am ashamed.

*The Emperor's Nightingale.*

It's only you, I love  
she says,  
and cannot say aught else.  
Poor "Emperor's nightingale."

You, you, ah you,  
she sighs.

But yet, when I "go off,"  
she'll fling her kisses  
for all the gallery to snarl upon,  
And so "come off"  
and rapt  
will pass me on the stairs.

*Celtic!*

We danced, poor fools, on the world's edge.

Because I saw her nimble legs  
clean against the sky,  
now there is no thing will give me ease.

I'll find again that edge of the world  
whereon she dances.

*Poor fool! she dances on the world's edge.*

*The compassionate pilgrim.*

I laughed,  
chatted gaily;  
was most attentive  
to the foil I'd brought to pique you.  
You'd no notion.

And though you laughed,  
I saw through it  
and was not hurt.

After,  
you stood silent, lone  
most pitiful.

All this trouble  
because I could not kiss you  
in the crowded room.  
You wanted to keep me  
But they'd not let you,  
and you gave way.  
Now I'm gone  
and you're a memory.  
Silent, lone,  
most pitiful.

*The Betrayal.*

This face is mine,  
Hollow and line.  
The same, yet bitter wine  
I'm drunk upon.

T'was held by one  
Who falsely spun  
A web of love,  
Below, above.

Yet it will prove  
Her evil, should she turn,  
But see the lips agin,  
Sad eyes, that burn, that burn.

*Excuses himself for being concerned at her going.*  
I've written enough to you,

about you  
and because of you;  
and dragged your beauty into too much light.  
Now I'll nurse an aching heart  
and with no outlet for the pain  
will crush it under.  
I'll forget you in a while  
remembering you're nothing.

When I was young,  
child of the sun,  
imminent with fire  
I did not write of women.

But you have taken the ichor from my veins,  
You have watered the vitriol of my brain.

*Day-Dreamings.*

You'll be sorry later on—  
for I'll come back  
and, chancing on you in some public place,  
you'll tremble. I'll be bronzed;  
contempt upon my face;  
ah . . . not for you,  
only that I'll have seen strong men dying.  
She that's fairest will be on my arm  
and in my pocket a thousand pounds.

You'll laugh . . .  
in spasms of fear . . . your eyes will go blank . . .  
and I'll not sleep for thinking of you  
wide-eyed at his side.

*In Defence.*

If I'd not burnt your letters as they came  
for fear their weight of love would stifle me,  
for fear when I'd grown old  
my children or my love would find them,  
or older still  
the pitiful scrawl across the pages  
would mad me with the longing—  
. . . all the pain of youth that passes . . .

Would I have thus forgot them all—  
remembering the half of a phrase,  
the splash of a tear.

But you kept my letters  
and those I wrote most passionate  
when I had ceased to love you,  
you showed most proudly.

Therefore your friends think  
'Poets' oh they're but human  
to let themselves be scorned so by mere woman.

*Columbine becomes "advanced."*

I hate you!  
Kiss me!  
Now I really hate you!  
Kiss me!  
There . . . you see.

Oh . . . how I hate you now.

You're dull, Columbine,  
Good Night!